

VZCZCXRO5892  
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEHSB #0714/01 2211307  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 091307Z AUG 07  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1769  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0232  
RUEHOR/AMEMBASSY GABORONE 2205  
RUEHLG/AMEMBASSY LILONGWE 1848  
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0946  
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 0133  
RUEHMB/AMEMBASSY MBABANE 0518  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0189  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 5316  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0078  
RUEHWD/AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK 1586  
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 0557  
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 0116  
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 0514

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000714

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN  
USAID FOR L. DOBBINS AND E. LOKEN  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [WFP](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: WORSENING HUNGER, DWINDLING HARVESTS

REF: HARARE 00712

HARARE 00000714 001.2 OF 002

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

1. Recent international NGO estimates indicate 4.1 million Zimbabweans will need food aid between November 2007 and April 2008, out of a total population estimated at 9-10 million. The UN World Food Program (WFP) plans to assist 3.3 million Zimbabweans, and C-SAFE, a consortium of US-sponsored NGOs, will provide food for at least 800,000. International NGOs, including WFP, have reported limited political bias in food aid distribution and monitor the process to ensure transparency. The government's own food distribution program through the Grain Marketing Board is widely recognized as a political exercise to reward government supporters and punish opponents.

-----  
PROJECTING POOR HARVESTS  
-----

2. The national requirement of about 1.8-1.9 million metric tons (mt) of grain was not met by April-May 2007 harvests of 799,000 mt of maize and 126,000 mt of millet and sorghum. USAID and farmers groups previously estimated winter (October) wheat harvests would range from 78,000 mt to 135,000 mt, but the government-controlled Herald newspaper recently warned that farmers may harvest only 40,000 mt or less. Given the uncertainties in both population and crop estimates, WFP anticipates that slightly more than 1 million tons of food imports and food aid will be required in the coming months.

## AFFECTED POPULATIONS

---

¶3. WFP's food distribution program in June 2007 was already reaching some 300,000 Zimbabweans a month, focusing on HIV/AIDS affected households and school children in high-density urban areas. The latest (June-July) crop and food supply assessment mission by UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP estimated a much higher number -- some 3.3 million -- will need food aid by November of this year. Subsequent upward revisions for the November-March "hungry season" indicate that at least 4.1 million people could face severe hunger before April 2008. WFP plans to provide food to 3.3 million of that number, and the US-sponsored Consortium for the Southern Africa Food Security Emergency (C-SAFE, comprising Catholic Relief Services, CARE, and World Vision) plans to provide food to at least 800,000 people. (Note: In the past five years, USAID has delivered more than 700,000 mt of food aid valued at more than US\$400 million to Zimbabwe, making the US the largest donor of food assistance to Zimbabwe. WFP has received more than US\$170 million from the US in FY 2007. Other donors to the WFP's Zimbabwe program include the U.K., European Union, Canada, Japan, Ireland, Sweden, African Development Bank, Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. End note.)

¶4. The worst-affected provinces are in the drought-ravaged south of the country, including Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, and Midlands. Food shortages are also severe in Manicaland and Masvingo.

---

## IMPORTS ON THE HORIZON

---

HARARE 00000714 002.2 OF 002

¶5. The Zimbabwe government contracted with Malawi to purchase 400,000 mt of maize, or about 40,000 mt a month for ten months beginning May 2007, according to WFP. Of this number, 116,000 mt were received as of August 3. Unconfirmed reports also indicate Zimbabwe has contracted to purchase 200,000 mt of maize from Tanzania, and perhaps additional maize from Zambia. Informal markets and cross-border trade are expected to bring in at least 61,000 mt of various grains.

---

## FILLING THE GAP: FOOD AID

---

¶6. Assuming these purchases are completed as planned, Zimbabwe will require at least 442,000 mt of food aid including 352,000 mt of cereals and grain in the coming months, according to USAID and WFP estimates, and additional non-cereal food assistance will be needed. Pledges have been received for slightly more than half of this amount as of August 1.

---

## SELECTION BIASES: BOTH SUBTLE AND OVERT

---

¶7. WFP works with international and local NGOs in compiling lists of beneficiaries before food aid is brought to the distribution sites, and in monitoring the distribution process to try to ensure honesty and transparency. ZANU-PF has pressured some NGOs to alter food recipient lists to favor party supporters (see Reftel), and food aid has been denied MDC supporters in Matabeleland South, Manicaland, and Mashonaland West, according to the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP). In addition, a senior official of the National Association of NGOs (NANGO) reported that some local NGOs have had "sporadic" confrontations with security forces bent on impounding relief shipments destined for drought-stricken areas. Also, NGOs are required to have food distribution sites approved by the government well before the aid is delivered. This enables government representatives to visit

the sites before the food-delivery dates, often to praise "the government's generosity" in making the food available to needy residents.

¶8. Politicization of the government's own food distribution program through the Grain Marketing Board is explicit and undisguised. For example, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) in February reported that the president of the Council of Chiefs had threatened to withhold food from villagers who supported the opposition in Chiredzi South by-elections last February. ZESN reported similar threats by the Chief before the rural district council elections of October 2006, when he warned that villagers who failed to support ZANU-PF would be expelled.

-----  
ZIMBABWE'S RESPONSE TO THE FOOD CRISIS  
-----

¶9. The Zimbabwe government has refused until now to make a formal appeal for food aid and, at the national level, has only grudgingly acknowledged any need for foreign assistance. Information Minister Ndlovu said in mid-July that US food donations would be accepted only as reparations for damage done to the people of Zimbabwe. "It is just a gimmick," Ndlovu said, "to soothe themselves of their guilt." Despite the negative rhetoric, however, some regional officials and local NGOs have expressed gratitude for the generosity of the US and other food donors.

DHANANI